



NOVEMBER 2003 SPOTLIGHT:

Somali Bantu Refugees: Resources on Children, Youth, & Families

The BRYCS project is acquiring and centralizing resources on Somali Bantu children, youth, and families. All of the resources are accompanied by descriptions from BRYCS, and many include the full text available on the BRYCS website, www.brycs.org.

In the spring of 2003, the United States opened its doors to the first of 12,000 Somali Bantu refugees, who have spent most of the past ten years in Kenyan refugee camps. With the promise of a new life in a new country, the Bantu are presented with many new, sometimes wonderful, things, up to now foreign to them. To provide some measure of assistance with the transition, Bantu over the age of fifteen receive up to eighty hours of cultural orientation (CO) before leaving Kenya.

According to figures from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), sixty percent of the Bantu population is under the age of seventeen, with thirty-one percent under the age of six. The typical family consists of four to eight children. In this BRYCS spotlight, we direct you to a number of resources that focus on Somali Bantu children, youth, and families.

The International Organization for Migration conducts cultural orientation for the Somali Bantu in Kenya. Several IOM staff share their words of wisdom about CO for youth, and health considerations for infants and young children, in [**Somali Bantu Cultural Orientation—Emails from Kenya**](#), one of the documents in our current Featured Search. The IOM's [**Somali Bantu Report**](#), reprinted here in full, addresses schooling, family and case composition, child-rearing practices, family unity and family relationships, and general information about the Bantu. A U.S. government report, [**Background on Potential Health Problems for Somali Bantu**](#), focuses on the health problems these new refugees face. These are issues which local resettlement organizations and health care providers will want to be aware of.

[**Who are the Somali Bantu?**](#) is a two page fact sheet by the [**Somali Bantu Community Organization \(SOBCO\)**](#) that touches on family structure, marriage, celebrations, mental health and communication styles. Check out [**SOBCO's website**](#) for current news and events, and learn about the Somali Bantu Children's Foundation. The Center for Applied Linguistics publication, [**The Somali Bantu: Their History and Culture**](#) offers insight into religion, family life, marriage and children, diet, dress, education, health care and mental health, language, and literacy.

From Daycare Trust in London, [**Reaching First Base: Guidelines of Good Practice on Meeting the Needs of Refugee Children from the Horn of Africa**](#) provides guidance to policy makers and service providers identifying best practices for daycare, nursery education, health services, schooling, and out-of-school care for a population with needs that apply to the Somali Bantu.

Although other publications featured in this collection of the BRYCS Clearinghouse address the Bantu in other parts of Africa, they include information useful for dealing with parenting styles cross-culturally. More information is offered about Bantu marriage and the birth of the first child,

which may be of use to child welfare or resettlement workers trying to sort out issues surrounding the family among Bantu-speaking refugees from Africa.

Read about last month's [featured program](#), **Parent School Connection**, a program of Somali Community Services of Seattle (SCSS), which seeks to provide an effective, culturally appropriate means of interaction among Somali parents, students, and the school system.